

**Identifying Potential Instances of Human Trafficking:
Applying a Novel Template of Indicators to Narratives in Police Incident Reports**

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Executive Summary

Human trafficking research is difficult. Even the most basic of tasks—that of identifying instances of human trafficking—proves challenging. At least two factors contribute to the problem of identification. The first considered here is that there is no reliable or complete database recording instances of human trafficking. We tackle this difficulty by examining an underused data source: officer narratives from police incident case reports. These are often overlooked in favor of the summary statistics drawn from them. The second factor that we consider is that there is no commonly-acknowledged methodology among stakeholders for identifying instances of human trafficking. In response, we survey the human trafficking literature to construct a novel template—named the *Human Trafficking Identification Template*.

The template is comprised of indicators about the victim, the suspect, and the scene of the crime, which when applied to narratives of police incident reports, can suggest the presence of human trafficking. Our preliminary research applied this novel technique to the narratives of police incident case reports from Greenville County, South Carolina. After applying the Human Trafficking Identification Template, we determined that 9 of 42 examined prostitution cases and 4 of 22 kidnapping/abduction cases might warrant further investigation for additional (or alternative) human trafficking charges.

Further investigation is necessary to confirm these cases, as well as to confirm that instances of human trafficking were not overlooked, yet this early research is a promising step toward identifying instances of human trafficking. Future research is necessary to refine the template to discover which indicators are pivotal to identifying instances of human trafficking. For the purpose of understanding human trafficking in South Carolina, we would also like to consider other jurisdictions in addition to Greenville County and to consider narratives included in other kinds of reports, such as those filed with victim service organizations.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is how best to capture the incidence of human trafficking victimization through crime reporting and other data systems to provide scientifically-sound estimates of the prevalence of human trafficking. There are two components to the problem: the first is to identify the criminal justice and non-criminal justice data sources that are likely to yield relevant information related to the incidence of human trafficking; the second is to synthesize the data to yield useful estimates of prevalence. The problem is important because South Carolina, like all states, needs reliable data on human trafficking to craft an appropriate response.

Review of the Literature

Currently, research captures incidents of human trafficking in South Carolina almost exclusively from criminal justice databases. The primary criminal justice database in South Carolina is the South Carolina Incident-Based Reporting System (SCIBRS). SCIBRS consists of information related to incident reports submitted by local law enforcement agencies to the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED). SLED has only been accepting incident reports with human trafficking offense codes since October 2014, but to date, no such submissions have been filed from local law enforcement agencies. This is expected to change with improved training over the next few years.

A second criminal justice database in South Carolina is the Computerized Criminal History Records (CCHR). CCHR consists of information related to booking reports and conviction records. A record results from any convictions or arrests for which an individual is fingerprinted. CCHR uses Court Docket Record (CDR) codes to identify offenses. Human trafficking CDR codes are based on specific sections and subsections of state statutes.

A third criminal justice database is the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) Inmate Records. SCDC identifies inmate offenses by its own unique coding system and CDR codes. Other criminal justice databases include that of the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services (SCDPPPS), which uses CDR codes, and that of the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), which uses its own offense codes. Likewise, these databases most likely capture few incidents of human trafficking. Minors caught up in sex trafficking would not be charged with prostitution even if they were charged with other offenses (e.g., drug possession), since, as minors, they would be considered victims of sex trafficking.

National and private-sector databases also provide resources for capturing incidents of human trafficking. Since 2007, the federally-funded National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) has compiled statistics on potential cases in South Carolina. From 2007 to 2015, the NHTRC received 943 calls about possible human trafficking cases in the state. Data for 2014 indicated 202 calls: 54 cases were identified as human trafficking. Of the 54 cases, 38 were related to sex trafficking, 14 to labor trafficking, and 2 to an unspecified trafficking type.

Other potential data sources for the victims of human trafficking come from state agencies and private organizations that provide victim services. At the state level, there is no collection of data specifically related to victims of human trafficking that is reported to, for instance, the Department of Social Services—the agency most responsible for victim services. Regarding the private sector, South Carolina has only one provider that offers shelter exclusively for human trafficking victims. Hopewood Haven is a faith-based shelter located in Greenwood, South Carolina, that opened less than one year ago. Hopewood Haven provides female residents aged 18 and older with medical attention, individual and group counseling services, education

services, life skills training, and spiritual mentoring. Attempts to capture incidents of human trafficking victimization would require amalgamating case reports from these disparate human trafficking victim services data sources and victim advocate networks.

Synthesizing data to make useful estimates from diverse sources is challenging. The varied definitions and methodologies found in the research literature for estimating the prevalence of human trafficking offer limited guidance regarding best practices for proceeding at any jurisdictional level. For example, in part citing the early work of Stansky and Finkelhor (2008), the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council reviewed research estimating the incidence of commercial exploitation and sex trafficking of minors and concluded that “a surprising number of estimates related to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States are accompanied by no information on the methods used to generate them” (2013, 48).

Referring to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) website for human trafficking articles confirms that there are even fewer studies that report methods for estimating human trafficking for adults—and none that report methods for human trafficking across an entire state. For example, Zhang (2012) uses respondent-driven sampling to estimate the number of hidden trafficked victims in the migrant population in California, but the study covers only a small region. Similarly, Clawson, Layne, and Small review methodologies to assess national-level prevalence data and note that the development of methodologies is in its “infancy” (2006, 17) and fraught with well-known problems related to definitions, measurements, reporting and duplication. Finally, Simich et al. (2014) completed an NIJ-funded project that demonstrated a promising approach using a screening tool to estimate the prevalence of human trafficking victims; however, it has not yet been used on the state level.

Estimating the prevalence of human trafficking in South Carolina is problematic: there are no commonly-acknowledged methods for this estimation, and there is no consensus in the literature for creating state-level estimates. Further, to date, there have been no incidents of human trafficking reported through SCIBRS. This underreporting is partly due to the fact that it was only in 2012 that South Carolina passed specific legislation to criminalize human trafficking (initial training of law enforcement and others is ongoing). Additionally, previous incidents of human trafficking were likely reported under more traditional criminal codes related to prostitution and kidnapping/abduction. Taking these factors into account, we developed a methodology that examines past police incident reports of prostitution and kidnapping/abduction to look for signs of human trafficking.

Study

We conducted a pilot study to better understand how reports from local law enforcement agencies may shed light on the prevalence of human trafficking incidents. We were particularly interested in applying a methodology to assess the nature of underreporting of human trafficking by local law enforcement agencies. We were also interested in learning what information regarding crimes related to human trafficking might be captured in the narratives of police incident reports. Information from narratives is seldom quantified or reported to SCIBRS, so such narratives could potentially provide information.

Background. As noted, the primary state criminal justice database to capture reports of human trafficking is SCIBRS, to which all local law enforcement agencies send criminal justice statistics. The aggregated local data sent to SCIBRS comes from individual narrative police incident case reports. We selected Greenville County, one of the largest counties in South

Carolina, to examine police incident case reports on prostitution and kidnapping/abduction, the offenses most likely to warrant additional charges of human trafficking. With these reports, we wanted to apply a methodology for discovering how cases of human trafficking may be undercounted.

Methodology. The South Carolina Statistical Analysis Center, located in the South Carolina Department of Public Safety, acted as a liaison to gain access to the Greenville Police Department and Greenville County Sheriff's Office's incident case reports on prostitution and kidnapping/abduction with assistance through the Records Division of the Greenville County Department of Public Safety. Forty-two prostitution incident case reports and 22 kidnapping/abduction incident case reports were analyzed to identify any possible overlap with human trafficking incidents. Cases were from a three-year period: 2010–2012. Names in the cases (i.e., victims, suspects, witnesses) were removed before reports were given to Clemson University. Reports were catalogued and relevant data were extracted and used to create a dataset.

Dataset Creation. Cases that involved reverse stings and some undercover investigations were excluded from the set of prostitution cases, and cases that involved family-related offenses (e.g., child custody) were excluded from the set of kidnapping/abduction cases. All other relevant data in the reports were extracted and used to construct a dataset. Demographic information (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age) was recorded for all parties involved in the incident (e.g., prostituted person, trafficker, john). This information was obtained from each of the case report's sections for victim, subject, and overflow. Information was also collected about the year, month, and time of the offense, and place where the incident occurred. We included in the dataset the following information from the narrative: 1) the crimes charged to all parties, 2)

the sexual orientation of the parties involved, and 3) the circumstance of the offenses. The circumstances of the offense were instrumental to our analyses of identifying potential human trafficking cases.

Creation of a Human Trafficking Identification Template. A review of the literature on indicators of human trafficking in the United States was conducted. From the research emerged the list of indicators used to create a human trafficking template (Appendix: Human Trafficking Identification Template). Often, law enforcement officers encounter either a trafficker or a victim of trafficking at the scene of a crime who provides alleged explanations for the situation. In these cases, it is important for law enforcement to note some of the indicators about the scene of the crime and about the victim, because a human trafficking investigation may need to follow. The template is to be used to examine incident case reports to determine the presence of indicators typically associated with crimes of human trafficking. Not all human trafficking cases will contain all the indicators included in the template. The presence (or absence) of these indicators in a case does not verify (or deny) the presence of human trafficking; rather, it raises a red flag for further investigation. Thus, the template was used as a tool to identify signs of potential human trafficking among the prostitution and kidnapping/abduction incident case reports.

The template consists of two main sections and attendant subsections. Indicators for the victim are provided, followed by indicators for the suspect/perpetrator and indicators for the scene of the crime. Human trafficking indicators for the victim were divided by theme into 10 subsections regarding being a minor; gender and sexual orientation; immigration status; being a foreigner; psychological indicators; physical indicators; sex-trafficking-specific indicators; sense of being controlled; conditions at work; and interaction with law enforcement. Human trafficking

indicators for the suspect were divided into six subsections: gender; immigration status; (apparent) relation to the victim; being a co-conspirator; being a john; and having a criminal record. Human trafficking indicators for the scene of the crime were divided into two subsections: type of the establishment and conditions of the establishment. Isolated and secured locations are more indicative of the possibility of human trafficking.

Screening of Incident Case Reports for Potential Human Trafficking Cases. Information reported on each individual within the 64 incident case reports was collected and included in a dataset. There was no overlap between prostitution and kidnapping/abduction cases. This information, in addition to that included in the narratives, was analyzed against the Human Trafficking Identification Template, and the findings were reported. In some instances, individuals mentioned in the narratives were not reported and therefore could not be included in the dataset. The analysis includes a list of the human trafficking indicators present in each of the incidents. Sometimes there was not enough information to assign an indicator. However, when this happened, the narrative of the analysis included the suspicion that the indicator may have been present. Also, for purposes of the analysis—in accordance with federal and state law definitions—*minors* are those individuals under the age of 18, and *prostituted females/persons* are those individuals who were performing commercial sex.

Results and Analysis. The analysis for the cases suspected of human trafficking is provided. The findings represent a comparison of data contained in the incident case reports with indicators in the Human Trafficking Identification Template. The human trafficking indicators included in the template were considered for each case to reach the conclusion that human trafficking may have occurred. The known dynamics of human trafficking were also taken into account when any suspicions were raised.

Prostitution. Forty-two prostitution incident case reports were analyzed and screened for possible human trafficking. Table 1 summarizes those human trafficking indicators included in the prostitution incident case reports.

Table 1

Human Trafficking Indicators in Prostitution Incident Case Reports

Indicators	N
Indicators for the prostituted person	
<u>Is a minor</u>	6
The minor appears to be under the control of an adult who is not the parent or legal guardian	3
The minor is providing commercial sex acts (i.e., exchanges sex for money, shelter, food, clothes, or any other good or service)	6
The minor has prior arrests for prostitution	1
The minor has been reported as a runaway	2
<u>Gender and sexual orientation</u>	
Is female	43
Is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, or questioning/queer (LGBTQ)	1
<u>Physical indicators</u>	
Has bruises, cuts, marks, burns, or any signs of physical abuse	1
<u>Sex-trafficking-specific indicators</u>	
Participates in the commercial sex industry or has a pimp/manager	4
Is linked to online advertising sites known for facilitating human trafficking and prostitution (e.g., backpage.com)	10
Shows signs of sexual behavior or abuse	40
Has prior arrests for prostitution	10
<u>Shows evidence of being controlled</u>	
Doesn't have physical possession of legal documentation (e.g., passport or driver's license)	3
Has false or fraudulent documentation	1
Has inability to move or leave job	1
Is constantly monitored when going in and out of the premises	1
<u>Interaction with law enforcement</u>	
References traveling to other cities or recovered in another state	2
Does not self-identify as victim	2
<hr/>	
Indicators for the suspect (e.g., pimp, trafficker, john)	
<u>Gender</u>	
Male	24
<u>(Apparent) Relation to the victim</u>	
Is the victim's friend	1
<u>Is a co-conspirator who did or attempted to</u>	
transport the victim	1

Indicators for the scene of the crimeType of establishment

Is a street/alley	20
Is a residence/home/apartment	9
Is a trailer parking lot	1
Is a parking lot/garage	6
Is a hotel/hostel/motel	10
Is a spa	2
Is a (possibly unlicensed) massage parlor	1
Is a strip club	1

Of 42 prostitution incident case reports, nine suggest possible human trafficking due to the high number of indicators present. Of those nine cases, four cases involved a total of six minors. Two of these six minors had been reported as runaways, while all six minors stated they had been commercially sexually exploited. One case did not include the age of the prostituted female, while in another, the age could not be confirmed but there was suspicion that she could have been a minor. The last three cases involved females over the age of 21. In a total of 6 cases the website *backpage.com* was used as a way to advertise presumably sexual services.

Hotel/hostel/motel was the most common establishment from the prostitution investigations that were suspected of human trafficking. A massage parlor and a trailer parking lot were also reported as places where prostitution may have occurred. Pimps or traffickers were present, mentioned or hinted at in four cases—two of these cases involved minors. The narratives suggest that although not mentioned explicitly, circumstances described in another three cases may have involved pimps or traffickers.

Kidnapping/Abduction. Twenty-two kidnapping/abduction incident case reports were analyzed and four cases of possible human trafficking were identified. Table 2 summarizes

human trafficking indicators present in kidnapping/abduction incident case reports. The rest of this paragraph discusses the cases suspected of human trafficking. Each of these cases involved an adult female victim who displayed signs of being involved in prostitution; three of the victims appeared to have a pimp or trafficker. Two victims referenced traveling to other states. The victims were between the ages of 22 and 55. Use of online advertising sites known for facilitating human trafficking and prostitution (e.g., backpage.com) were reported in two of the cases. Hotels were the most common establishment involved in the investigations, accounting for three out four cases. The other incident took place in the victim’s residence.

Table 2

<i>Human Trafficking Indicators in Kidnapping/Abduction Incident Case Reports</i>	
Indicators/CID	N
Indicators for the kidnapped/abducted person	
<u>Is a minor (i.e., under age 18)</u>	7
The minor appears to be under the control of an adult who is not the parent or legal guardian	2
The minor is providing commercial sex acts (i.e., exchanges sex for money, shelter, food, clothes, or any other good or service)	1
The minor has prior arrests for prostitution	1
Has been in the child welfare/foster care system	1
<u>Gender and sexual orientation</u>	Female 22
<u>Physical indicators</u>	
Has bruises, cuts, marks, burns, or any signs of physical abuse	9
Has an addition to drugs or alcohol	1
<u>Sex-trafficking-specific indicators</u>	
Participates in the commercial sex industry and/or has a pimp/manager	3
Is linked to online advertising sites known for facilitating human trafficking and prostitution (e.g., <i>backpage.com</i>)	2
Shows signs of sexual behavior or abuse	3
<u>Shows evidence of being controlled</u>	
Doesn’t have physical possession of legal documentation (e.g., passport or driver’s license)	1
Does not handle own money; has no financial records or bank account	1

Conditions at work

Lives with employer 1

Interaction with law enforcement

Possesses unexplained mobile phones or money 2

Claims to be just visiting; cannot give a clear address or place of stay 1

References traveling to other cities or recovered in another state 2

Has inconsistencies in her story 7

Does not cooperate with investigation (e.g., gives false information about self and others, protects trafficker) 1

Does not self-identify as victim 1

Has been reported as a missing person 1

Indicators for the suspect (e.g., kidnapper, abductor)

Gender

Male 20

(Apparent) Relation to the victim

Is the spouse or significant other 1

Is an acquaintance 2

Is a co-conspirator who did or attempted to

Isolate the victim 2

Indicators for the scene of the crime

Type of establishment

Is a street/alley 10

Is a bar/club 1

Is a residence/home/apartment 4

Is a parking lot/garage 1

Is a hotel/hostel/motel 3

Is a commercial/office building 1

Summary

The preliminary findings from the study suggest that analyzing narratives from police incident case reports may be useful for understanding the nature of human trafficking beyond the summary statistics that are reported to SCIBRS. The findings suggest that the case factors underlying some prostitution and kidnapping/abduction cases may also warrant either additional or alternative human trafficking charges. Although the results are preliminary, perhaps as many as 9 of the 42 prostitution cases and 4 of the 22 kidnapping/abduction cases we examined merit consideration as incidents of human trafficking. Whether these results are generalizable to other

local law enforcement jurisdictions is yet unknown, but the results do provide some idea of the underreporting of human trafficking incidents. The extent to which such underreporting occurs across other local jurisdictions across the state and the extent to which law enforcement will increase reports of human trafficking remain important research questions.

The preliminary results of the study also point to the potential usefulness of the Human Trafficking Identification Template as a tool for analyzing incident case reports. The use of a template tool that allows for reasonable inference about the presence of human trafficking is an important methodological approach that can be modified for use on other data sets. Depending on the criminal justice dataset to be analyzed, similar templates could be created to assess the prevalence of the underreporting of human trafficking. For example, similar templates can be used to analyze narrative accounts of incidents reported to victim service organizations (see, e.g., Simich et al. 2014 for use of a screening tool for victims) or case narratives from the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce.

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Appendix

Human Trafficking Identification Template

Not all human trafficking cases contain all the indicators included below. The presence (or absence) of these indicators does not verify (or deny) the presence of human trafficking; rather, a flag is raised for further investigation.

Indicators for the victim

- Is a minor (i.e., under age 18) who
 - Appears to be under the control of an adult who is not the parent or legal guardian
 - Is providing commercial sex acts (i.e., exchanges sex for money, shelter, food, clothes, or any other good or service)
 - Has prior arrests for prostitution
 - Has been reported as a runaway
 - Is homeless
 - Has been in the child welfare/foster care system
 - Does not attend school or has substantial gaps in schooling
- Gender and sexual orientation
 - Female
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, or questioning/queer (LGBTQ)
- Immigration status
 - Is an undocumented alien
 - Is a temporary worker
- Foreigners
 - Has recently arrived from Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Canada, Africa
 - Doesn't speak English
 - Is misinformed about rights in this country
 - Fears for safety of family in home country
 - Is unfamiliar with U.S. culture
- Psychological indicators
 - Avoids eye contact
 - Has (or a relative has) been threatened with harm if she/he attempts to leave
 - Has been threatened with deportation or law enforcement action
 - Is reluctant to talk about family background
 - Shows feelings of helplessness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or depression
 - Seems to have dependent, submissive, and fearful behavior in the presence of others
 - Has experienced family dysfunction (e.g., emotional, sexual, or physical abuse; neglect, substance abuse)

- Physical indicators
 - Has bruises, cuts, marks, burns, or any signs of physical abuse
 - Has branding tattoos, usually across chest or back (e.g., barcodes, a male's name or initials)
 - Has an addiction to drugs or alcohol
 - Has been deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other life necessities
- Sex-trafficking-specific indicators
 - Participates in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp/manager
 - Is linked to online advertising sites known for facilitating human trafficking and prostitution (e.g., *backpage.com*)
 - Shows signs of sexual behavior or abuse
 - Has prior arrests for prostitution
- Shows evidence of being controlled
 - Doesn't have physical possession of legal documentation (e.g., passport or driver's license)
 - Has false or fraudulent documentation
 - Is not allowed to speak to others alone (e.g., a third party required to be present or translate)
 - Inability to move or leave job
 - Is not allowed to leave the premises; doesn't have freedom of movement
 - Is allowed to leave the premises only if escorted
 - Is constantly monitored when going in and out of the premises
 - Owes money to someone and cannot pay it off
 - Does not handle own money; has no financial records or bank account
- Conditions at work
 - Has no breaks or other unreasonable conditions at work
 - Works long and unusual hours
 - Lives, eats, and sleeps in closed quarters
 - Lives with multiple people in the same crowded space
 - Lives with employer
 - Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Interaction with law enforcement
 - Possesses unexplained mobile phones or money
 - Claims to be just visiting; cannot give a clear address or place of stay
 - References traveling to other cities or recovered in another state
 - Is disoriented and does not know where she is (e.g., neighborhood, city, state)
 - Has limited or no sense of time or space
 - Has inconsistencies in her story
 - Distrusts outsiders, especially law enforcement or people in uniform
 - Information provided to law enforcement seems rehearsed or scripted
 - Does not cooperate with investigation (e.g., gives false information about self and others, or protects trafficker)
 - Does not self-identify as victim
 - Sees herself as a criminal rather than a victim
 - Has been reported as a missing person

Indicators for the suspect/perpetrator

- Gender
 - Male
- Immigration status
 - Is an undocumented alien
 - Is a temporary worker
- (Apparent) Relation to the victim
 - Is the spouse or significant other
 - Is a friend
 - Is an acquaintance
 - Is a blood relative (e.g., parent, sibling, cousin)
 - Is a civil relative (e.g., parent-in-law, step-parent)
 - Is the employer
- Is a co-conspirator who did or attempted to
 - Isolate the victim
 - Harbor the victim
 - Transport the victim
 - Aided in the transport of the victim
 - Smuggler
 - Recruit the victim
 - Entice the victim
 - Solicit the victim (i.e., a john)
- Has a criminal record

Indicators for the scene of the crime:

- Type of establishment
 - Is a street/alley
 - Is a bar/club
 - Is a restaurant
 - Is a residence/home/apartment
 - Is a trailer parking lot
 - Is a parking lot/garage
 - Is a farm
 - Is a hotel/hostel/motel
 - Is a spa
 - Is a (possibly unlicensed) massage parlor
 - Is a nail salon
 - Is a strip club
 - Is a house-cleaning service business
 - Is a landscape and gardening business
 - Is a construction site
 - Is a casino
 - Is a factory
 - Is a commercial/office building
- Conditions of the establishment
 - The living conditions are poor

- The working conditions are poor
- Is overcrowded
- The living facility has been altered to facilitate prostitution
- There is a steady flow of males in and out of the premises
- There are bars on the windows
- The windows are boarded up or opaque
- There are locks on the windows
- There are locks on the outside of the bedroom doors (or other room doors inside the establishment)
- There are chains in sight
- There is video surveillance
- The premises are surrounded with barbed wire fence directed internally to prevent people from getting out

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